

Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen – Minutes
Wednesday, April 3, 2019 – 5:00 pm
Rowe Town Hall - Hearing Room 1

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Jennifer Morse at 5:03 p.m.

Present: Jennifer Morse, Chair, Dennis May, Vice Chair, Chuck Sokol – Member
Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau
Finance Committee: Wayne Zavotka, Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike
Assessor's Chair: Rick Williams
Audience: Ruth Loomis, Mitch Soviecke, Karen Soviecke, Carrie Silva, Bob Silva, Jesse Albretch, Travis Albretch, Dan Wessman, Bob Rice,
Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning & Development (FRCOG) Walt Quist, MTWP Representative for Rowe

OPEN MEETING

Announcement of recording devices & noteworthy information: one recording device

JOINT MEETING WITH ASSESSORS & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 5 P.M.

To Discuss the FY2020 Budget and Annual Town Meeting Warrant

General Budget/Levy Limit: Assessors Chair Rick Williams joined the meeting to review recent appraisals of the hydro facilities and the effect on the taxing capability of the town. While the town is typically limited to a 2.5% increase over the previous year's levy limit, the town is permitted to assess any new growth as determined by appraisals. The result is a substantially large new growth for the town. This means that the town has the ability to raise an additional \$584,000 in taxes for FY2020. For comparison, residential tax rates for the last few years are as follows: FY18: \$6.86, FY19: \$5.01, FY20 (Projected): \$5.42.

Chair Williams explained there were applications for abatement that were currently in process. He cautioned that there should be monies put in the Overlay account since taxpayers have the right to contest the decision to the state Appellate Tax Board (ATB) in the event the Board of Assessors deny the abatement. While they still have to pay their taxes in the meantime, should the ATB rule in favor of the utilities, the town would be required to reimburse funds. Annually the Assessors review the Overlay Surplus Account. If the ATB upholds the town's valuations, the Assessors can declare the money as overlay surplus, which would be released to the town's general fund. A decision by the ATB could take several years, this could result in well over a million dollars being set aside. Until then, the town could not benefit from these funds.

Assessors Budget: Chair Williams reported that the Assessors are asking for a total of \$50,000 for legal funding to navigate the process with abatement applications. They are requesting \$25,000 be appropriated from free cash at the special town meeting held the same night as the annual town meeting. This would allow for the funds to be expended immediately. The other \$25,000 is being requested at the annual town meeting out of taxation, which would be available July 1st.

Capital Projects: Some of the capital projects this year include:

- A generator replacement at the fire station for \$15,500.

- Purchasing a used fire engine from Charlemont for \$72,000. Charlemont is pursuing purchasing a rescue vehicle and no longer needs this particular vehicle. This would replace Engine 4, which was purchased in 1993, with a 2003 engine. Engine 4 has had a number of electrical problems and is often out of service.
- An OSHA-required filter for Engine 1 for \$10,000. This is a new requirement and must be done.
- SCBA purchases for \$75,016. The town can choose to lease for roughly \$16,000 a year to even out the costs and make it part of the operating budget versus a capital expense, but the price would eventually cost almost twice as much over the ten-year life of SCBA units.

Next Meeting: A potential meeting April 9, at 7:00 was scheduled to finalize budget.

Finance Committee Members and Rick Williams left the Meeting at 6:25 p.m.

APPOINTMENTS

- 6:30 p.m. - Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning & Development (FRCOG) & Walt Quist, Rowe Rep.
Discussion regarding Woodlands Partnership:

Walt Quist said he had been working on the Woodlands Partnership for over five years as representative for Rowe. The enabling State legislation that created the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) was adopted by in 2018 and identified 21 municipalities are eligible to participate. The next step is to for the town to vote to opt in and become a participant by either Board of Selectmen vote or Town meeting vote. Mr. Quist noted that there is no monetary commitment to the town and that it is not very impactful to the town. He felt the benefits were: opportunities for land protection, sustainable forests, opportunities related to good forest management with tourism. Following attending over 60 meetings, Mr. Quist recommended the town participate. He felt that the legislation was modified to address concerns following these meetings. Mr. Quist said that there could be potential for landowners to obtain the expertise to manage their forests and protect their land. Carbon market projects for owners with significant tracts of land. Ms. Sloan said that the there was a focus of economic development and that the decisions would be made by a Board. Ms. Sloan said that there had been misinformation reported that said the Partnership was supporting biomass projects and she stressed that it was not included in the legislation

Motion to Join Partnership: Member Sokol made a motion that the Town of Rowe agrees to participate in the activities of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership as provided for in Section 91 of Chapter 209 of the Acts of 2018, an Act Promotion Climate Change Adaptation, Environmental and Natural Resource Protection, and Investment in Recreational Assets and Opportunity (the "Environmental Bond Bill"). The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May was unanimously accepted. (3-0-0)

Mr. Quist agreed to continue on as the Woodland Partnership Representative for Rowe.

Peggy Sloan and Walt Quist left the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

- MLP Update: Executive Secretary reported meeting with the George Propane to work out details for the propane tank installation for the back up generator fuel. She also met with Dave Loiko of Westfield Gas and Electric to review the location and make certain it did not affect the

electrical conduit location. Member Sokol reported the informational session for the residents about the new broadband installation went very well.

- **7:00 p.m. - Citizens Request – Karen Soveicke:** Mitch Soveicke opened the meeting expressing concern over what has happened to our roads (Davenport and Davis Mine Road) this year and thought the conditions were the worst they had ever been. Residents expressed concerns over things that were done to the road that things that have not have been done whole road. There was concern expressed that the road was impassable in places, people could not get to work and safety vehicles could not get in. Citizens presented the following list:
 - 1- Taking the crown off of the road in fall
 - 2- Not cleaning out leaves and debris from ditches
 - 3- After grading used to pick off sod and rocks and now they fall into ditches
 - 4- not opening bleeders
 - 5- not winging
 - 6- not flattening daily or twice daily in mud season
 - 7- Just pushing brush to side, not cleanin it up and chipping it
 - 8- no “Grasshopper” work for 3 years

Following discussion, it was agreed to first touch base with Lance over the concerns and what is the long range plan due to safety issues. It was agreed that the Board of Selectmen would meet with Lance and get back in touch with everyone and all come in again to hear the plan. It was asked to put close road sign when needed.

At 7:22 Ruth Loomis, Mitch Soviecke, Karen Soviecke, Carrie Silva, Bob Silva, Jesse Albretch, Travis Albretch, Dan Wessman, Bob Rice, Maggie Rice left the meeting

At 7:24 Wayne Zavotka returned to the meeting

- **Admin Job Description and Plan for FY2020:** Following discussion, the Board was in agreement that 3 positions to perform administrative work was not appropriate. Members reviewed a draft job description for an administrative assistant for 32 hours of work that would include the following in addition to what the current administrative assistant:
 - Human resources management
 - Administrative tasks for Board of Health
 - Take on grants and managing grants
 - Facility maintenance oversight
 - Special projects for the Board of Selectmen and other boards
 - Bridge and road projects
 - Green Communities Grant
 - Board and Committees could turn to for their bigger projects
- **All Boards/Committee Meeting – April 15th:** Chair Morse said that the All Boards FY20 Meeting will take place at 6:30 pm at the Rowe School. The FY 20 Budget will be reviewed
- **Adopt- 2018 Community Compact Financial Mgt. Best Practice:** Chair Morse said that Phoebe Walker of FRCOG contacted her and asked that the Board adopt the Community Compact Financial Management Best Practice Capital Improvement Plan for the town. Chair Morse said

that she and the Finance Committee Chair were very disappointed with the results. FRCOG Consultant Markarian had promised to give a presentation, a binder and it fell quite short. She said she would contact Ms. Walker and express the disappointment. It was agreed that it needs a great deal additional work.

Motion to Accept CIP: Chair Morse made a motion to accept the Community Compact Financial Management Best Practice Capital Improvement Plan. The motion, seconded by Member Sokol, was unanimously accepted. (3-0-0)

- Town Hall Bathrooms: Town Custodian reported some issues with the bathrooms at Town Hall and it was agreed to monitor the situation.
- Fire Dept. – OSHA Requirements for Gear Washing Equipment: An email was reviewed from Fire Chief about a new requirement from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) following a visit from an OSHA Inspector on Friday. Gear washing equipment was also needed and he would apply for with a grant and share with other towns.

Tunnel Road Brush Burning: There was a citizen that complained to Member Sokol was that the Police reported that his brush fire was too big and he spoke with the Fire Chief who said he was fine and was acting appropriately. Later, Deputy Chief Sprague came by and said he had to put out the fire. Mr. Humbert's complaint was that if the Chief made a decision, that it be honored. Upon inspection Deputy Chief thought it was too large and put it out. It was after 4:00 pm and Mr. Humbert was upset that he could have take care of it himself and that the Chief could have just called him and tell him the plan changed. It was agreed to speak with the Fire Chief.

- Employee Retirement: Chair Morse said that she had spoken with Tax Collector Sandy Daviau and she indicated that she was interested in working as the Tax Collector in the future.

MINUTES: Tabled until a later date

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY UPDATES

Oil Tank Removal Quote: Executive Secretary met with Mike Davenport of Davenport Trucking to show him the area where the oil tank needs to be removed. He sent in a quotation for the amount of \$6500.00. It was agreed to proceed with the removal following Town meeting.

Indoor Air Quality Test: Executive Secretary met with the Indoor Air Quality Test specialist and he preformed some tests. He will have a report very soon and will compare the test he completed in 2008.

Boiler Repair Update: The Town Hall boiler by replacing a primary control and then returned today to replace a copper feed line that was severely kinked.

Town Report Update: Executive Secretary reported the Town Report was nearing completion and that it will be delivered to the printer in a few more days. Delays were due to not getting reports from people.

Free Traffic Counts: Ms. Boudreau said the FRCOG offered a free traffic count to towns and thought it might be a good idea since Chief Shippee needed to perform the count in order to obtain new speed signage for the Town. Vice-Chair May agreed to speak with the Chief about it.

AJOURNMENT: Seeing no further business, Member Sokol made a motion to adjourn the Meeting at 8:51 p.m. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May, was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

Respectfully Submitted
Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary

Approval Date: May 1, 2019

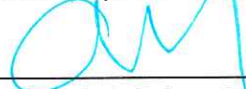
Approved:



Jennifer Morse, Chair



Dennis May, Vice-Chair



Chuck Sokol, Select Board Member

Documents:

- Woodlands Partnership – December 2018 Update (4 pgs.)
- FAQ About the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (8 pgs.)
- Deerfield River Watershed Assn. – Letter to Town Select Boards
- Peggy Sloan Letter re: Woodlands Partnership (3 pgs.)
- Davenport Trucking – oil tank removal estimate
- Budget Worksheets FY20
- Email from Fire Chief

Mail:

- FCRHRA – Community Block Grant Summary
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